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ABSTRACT

The Michigan Library Consortium (MLC) is studying the problems and possibilities of networking, with the Ohio College Library Center (OCLC) as a model and possible data base for the MLC. Standards on an international scale must be developed, and the need for constantly improving technology, particularly computers, must be recognized. Since the needs of individuals, institutions, and consortia may differ from one another, and from those of the makers of the data base, administrative and communication structures must be created to provide interface between the various network components. As the scope and range of networks increase, library and information network personnel will need to devote increasingly larger portions of their time to such communication. (LS)

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MICHIGAN LIBRARY CONSORTIUM

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WORKING PAPER NO. 4

INFORMATION TRANSFER WITH THE OHIO COLLEGE LIBRARY CENTER PROGRAM AS A MODEL.

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1 MAY 1975

IR002 432

Information Transfer

with the

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INTRODUCTION

The idea of library cooperation has been changed in some instances to mean networking. A network is only as efficient or functions well to the extent that each "node" responds with equal dependence and competence. Literally if one part of a network malfunctions it can disrupt the entire complex. An investment in networking, therefore, means that all those who make such an investment must receive an equal return for their input. Without this equality of self-interest on the part of each node of a network its technical basis begins to malfunction and becomes, in many instances, too expensive or undependable to maintain.

In September of last year Paper No.2 entitled "Communication Mechanisms and the Consortium Office" was issued to try to show how the Central Office would keep the membership informed of its and the Consortium's activities. No prescription was suggested how the membership would bring input into the Consortium Office for dissemination other than by referring to the mechanisms that are available through By-Laws, the Executive Council, the Trustees and the standing committees. Once a program has begun which is administered for the membership, whether it be from the Consortium Office or from some other location, organizational and administrative devices are required to insure that all of those who are participating in that program are doing so with equal competence. It cannot be said too often that dependable competence determines the efficiency of operation for networks. Even though we are not as yet connected to the data base of OCLC, it is very evident that a whole new array of information transfer procedures must be regularized. Without a structure we shall not be able to take advantage of the OCLC data base which apparently is becoming a planetary utility. If we do not exploit it to the fullest, those of us who are paying for access to the data base will in part be utilizing our funds and time without full effectiveness. In this paper OCLC is used as the example, or model if you wish, but the problems that are discussed here will become just as important and real for any other program that the Consortium undertakes. The technique of rhetorical analogies will have to be used. They are poor devices, but I think we all realize that library networking, as our Consortium, if it is to work consistently, requires administrative organizations for which there are no existing models. One could look toward industry for examples but in these instances industry has a different basis for determining whether to continue or discontinue an operation which ordinarily has a very simple goal of profit making. Government bureaucracies could also perhaps be used as models, but here again a bureaucracy from a governmental point of view is usually established and one of its functions is self-maintenance and growth rather than effecting economy and efficiency through sharing.

OCLC MODEL

Planetary Utility. The OCLC installation is still only a data base from which one can obtain cards typed from the content of the data base or learn what is listed in the data base. The content comes from many sources. Even though there has been at least 100 years of attempt at standardizing the bibliographic content of this data base, it is still not sufficiently formalized and structured for maximum efficiency in a computer nor does it take into account different languages and objectives of libraries of other nations. New planetary efforts of altering the existing standards are continuously being studied and at the present time being implemented, as for example, Chapter 6 of the Anglo-American Catalog Rules. There are several standards used in the OCLC data base producing duplicate entries, for example medical titles that are now entered by Ohio institutions may or may not adhere to the standards of the National Library of Medicine, but certainly do not match the Library of Congress entries. New services are being added for the OCLC membership which modify the existing elements in the data base as well as adding on to its complexity, for example, the cataloging of serials, serials control and other operations. The size of the data base requires constant modification in its organization, for example changing from a three letter to a four letter identification code for libraries. The intellectual needs and possibilities with the existing technology produce the need (not just the temptation) to experiment with the development of new search methods and with additional data elements. The success of OCLC speaks for itself. However, those of us who are conservative have qualms that there are too few people who understand fully the complications of the translation of our written rules into machine readable form--are we being overprogrammed, overengineered and oversold on the capabilities of a machine operating system? Without question as the participation in the access to the OCLC data base grows and as this data base adds new elements, expertise must be developed which allows our separate institutions the assurance that appropriate documentation and staff specialization exists to evaluate the system and to insure fiscal feasibility. We would be defeating our purpose if we were to allow a planetary utility to impoverish us in our ability to function as separate institutions.

Technology. There are two kinds of technology that are involved in the creation of the OCLC data base, that which is under the control of the OCLC agency itself and that which is external to OCLC. The size of the data base and the number of institutions wishing to have access requires the continual addition of new machines to accommodate the qualitative changes in the size of the data base and the number of users that wish to be part of this planetary utility. This in turn means changing the internal operations to insure that the intellectual standards mentioned above are maintained within tolerable limits. Because of the plethora of options and because the computing industry is a world wide one, new instruments are constantly being developed which must be tested and if found more suitable for OCLC use, adopted. With the large number of institutions involved and particularly if access to the OCLC data base goes beyond the continental United States a whole

new cadre of expertise must be available to insure dependable computer operations. How do we get this new group of experts to understand the specific requirements for bibliographic retrieval that is necessary for assisting the elementary school user as well as the most sophisticated world researcher?

Although it might be possible because of the sheer size of OCLC to be able to afford and to acquire expert staff to insure that appropriate and efficient machines are available, there are other agencies which are required to keep these machines in operations. Access to the data base that now sits in Columbus relies upon telephone lines that must function with dependability. Certainly we have been fortunate in the United States to have electronic communications that have developed into a dependable phone system, but what effect will participation in satellite communication or through other means have on the total access into the OCLC data base. There are probably many technical options that are available to protect the participants. One thing that should be recognized is that dividing up the data base among different computers throughout the nation or throughout the world and interconnecting them through some telecommunications is not a solution but a further complication.

What must be point out is the need to have an expert staff somewhere on whom we can depend on as librarians and with whom we can communicate to insure that our specific needs are met and placed in a priority that relates to our institutional purposes and objectives as well as to those of our own Consortium.

Institutional Needs. The reason for most of us joining MLC was to insure the best possible uses of our resources and to be able to utilize the work of others to avoid expensive local duplication. We have to have an organization to be sure that our investment actually produces efficiency with our own institutions; that is, the Consortium operation costs and participation in OCLC cannot overwhelm our local requirements. This necessitates an ubiquitous administrative group. If we look at the complex mechanism cursorily described above we have a whole series of separate agencies which must relate to one another for network continuity and dependability.

1. We cannot avoid the idea that every library has individual users. We may try to generalize and organize things for the "general user" who is a statistical nonentity, but we must always be ready to deal with the individual in his search for information. We must make our rules and our organizations understandable to individuals, not to groups. This means we must have an organization that relates to our primary clientele as well as to the massive network that goes beyond our own institution.

2. Under our present arrangement we have a Consortium Office. This office must function as a go between with the individual institution to OCLC for the MLC membership participating in the OCLC operation. This means that an organization must be

formed which deals not only with the technical matters but with also the funding and paying operations. It should be already clear from previous working papers that people and documents are going to have to be employed to insure that information and materials are appropriately transferred.

3. The Consortium itself has to have an organization to see to it that its objectives are always in order and that there is a monitoring device for the Consortium Office. As it has been stated again and again, the Consortium Office could not, even if there were such an empire builder in that Office, to be able to dictate how separate institutions who are members should operate and function. The Consoritum has three separate units in existence now, the Executive Council, the Trustees, and Committees.

4. Obivously OCLC must have its own administrative arrangements that insures the engineering, the intellectual work and the fiscal operations are accomplished. OCLC as we all know started out as a separate agency just as MLC. It too has its own governing mechanism. As it is growing toward a planetary utility, new monitoring and governing boards have had to be established. Just how MLC is to have its input into this arrangement is as yet unclear.

5. Our separate institutions, the Consortium, OCLC and other agencies that are trying to relate to the OCLC operation have sponsoring bodies who wish to have, and undoubtedly do have, influence on the way each of these agencies function relative to one another. The term coordinating is much too puny a word to give a sense of comprehension to the complex series of operations that are evolving.

6. Agencies outside of our separate library institutions and those that relate directly to OCLC can and do have an influence on how our network develops and evolves. Within the past few years with inflation and recession radical readjustments of expenditures for almost everything have had to be made. So far the computing industry has been able to insure that increased automation reduces costs because the operations (if well planned) become less labor intensive than previously. This will allow, most of us hope, to pay for our increased costs in utilities, periodical subscriptions and salaries.

7. There are many outside agencies that are not directly related to the technology of OCLC participation which may have an influence on how we will proceed to function as a Consortium using the OCLC data base. First of all, we must remember that we are only one of already seven other Consortia who have organized themselves to relate to OCLC. More Consortia are being formed. Even a midwest group is in the process of trying to consolidate existing Consortia for some reason as yet undefined. As already mentioned, there are planetary standardizing agencies

that are going to continue their studies which may make our present bibliographic descriptions different if not even obsolete. As individuals, as members of an institution, as members of our own Consortium, and as participants in OCLC that forms a central unit that relates to other Consortia and to the whole electronic network of our planet means we cannot remain in an ivory tower. Ivory towers may be beautiful monuments and inspire artistic awe, but they do not lead us to social good and protect us from exploitation. As librarians who are participating in the transmission of knowledge and culture, we should be aware that sheer size and administrative titles do not provide individuals with God-like knowledge. To the point of tedium I can only insist that if our objective is to form a network to share and to utilize our resources for as many of our citizens as possible, then we must all be equally informed and equally willing to learn.

AN ANALOGY

Being from Michigan I think most of us can visualize the impact of the automobile upon the world. As more and more automobiles were produced, it freed many individuals to do things that were not possible before. On the other hand it demanded that we literally change the surface of our earth and we establish rules and regulations relative to the use of the automobile whether we owned one or not. We have traffic signs which must be obeyed to avoid accidents and deaths. Even in the United States we have had to begin to use international traffic signs to assist those who are illiterate or at least illiterate in English. We have had to construct roads that developed a whole new engineering expertise that has produced construction monuments which have no analogy in human endeavor. The use of the automobile has brought about so many rules and regulations that no day goes by which does not require us to adhere to them one way or another. Planetary machine readable bibliographic data bases will alter our institutions and how we transfer information.

EXTENSION OF MLC COMMUNICATION PATTERNS

The following discussion is meant to describe what must be done to keep OCLC an operational program within MLC. The purpose here is <u>not</u> to describe how big an operation should be built and how centralized (or decentralized) the MLC Consortium should be. How many people will have to be employed to carry out the information transfer depends upon the number of institutions participating in OCLC from MLC. It is quite possible that if the only program MLC mounts and only a few institutions wish to participate in OCLC, one professional, with some clerical staff, at a central office would be sufficient to carry out most of the communications discussed below. There are only a certain number of ways that information can be transferred. Everyone knows what these are, but if we are going to see how to undertake these communication programs best, we might review the options that we have to accomplish certain kinds of information transfer and when to use which.

Table I

Methods of Communicating
Organizational Information

I. Recorded Means

- A. Letters
- B. Special Communiques
  - (1) Memoranda
  - (2) Reports
  - (3) Papers
  - (4) Cort Cat News
  - (5) MLC-NC
- C. Minutes
- D. Special Reports

II. Oral

- A. Face to Face
  - (1) Among member institutions
  - (2) With OCLC
  - (3) With other agencies
- B. Group activities
  - (1) Seminars and Workshops
    - (a) Within MLC
    - (b) OCLC
    - (c) Other agencies
  - (2) Meetings
    - (a) Executive Council
    - (b) Trustees
    - (c) OCLC
    - (d) CCLN
    - (e) Other professional agencies dealing with networks.
- C. Telecommunications
  - (1) Telephone
    - (a) One to one
    - (b) Conference call
  - (2) Other telecommunications
    - (a) Teletype (or other hard copy devices)
    - (b) Cathode ray tube

Table II

Meetings of MLC
and for
OCLC Participation

Agency	Location	Format	Frequency	Travel
MLC Membership	Member Institution	1. Supervisory	pro re nata	
		2. Workshop or Seminars	pro re nata	
	Within State	3. MLC Workshops or Seminars	quarterly	(1) (2)
	Within or out State	4. Other Workshops Seminars	semiannually	(1) (2)
MLC Staff	MLC Member	1. Profile	annually	(2)
		2. Analysis	annually	(2)
		3. Training	annually	(2)
MLC Staff	OCLC Columbus	1. Consortium Coordinator	monthly	(2)
		2. Peer Evaluation	bimonthly	(2)
		3. Executive	monthly	(2)
		4. Special Workshops or Seminars	quarterly	(2)
MLC Staff MLC Member	Within State	1. Trustees	annually	(1) (2)
		2. Executive Council	quarterly	(1) (2)
		3. Standing Committees	quarterly	(1) (2)
		4. Peer Evaluation	bimonthly	(1) (2)
MLC Staff	Out State	1. CCLN	bimonthly	(2)
		2. Professional Organizations	quarterly	(2)
		3. Special Conferences	semiannually	(2)

(1) MLC Member = 21 meetings per annum
(2) MLC Staff = 70 meetings per annum

The recorded means as listed in Table I are already so extensive that the paper work that the Membership must handle and read probably cannot be extended much further without all of our institutions reorganizing. The addition of the MLC-NC Newsletter should mark the end of any further MLC communications series, but this cannot be made as a firm promise.

Oral communication obviously means individuals must talk with each other. Table II lists the known and a few expected meetings that will be required of MLC and for OCLC participation by the Membership and MLC staff for the coming year. This is by no means an exhaustive list. To help interpret Table II, a MLC member institution, should it have representation on the Executive Council, a committee and a peer evaluation group besides obviously being a part of the Board of Trustees may have to support the cost of 21 meetings, at least one or two of these out of state. For the MLC staff the number of meetings is a minimum of 70 per year not counting consultative meetings at member institutions. An astonishing number of 48 of these meetings are out of state. Since some of these meetings will obviously be more than one day in length and if one considers an individual has only 215 to 220 working days a year, how is information acquired by one individual to be conveyed to all who need to know within the Consortium?

In preparing this paper in which OCLC was used as an example about our future communication and information transfer development, OCLC was used because it represents an organization designed to use telecommunications to help decrease some of our needs and costs in communicating and distributing information. The results of this effort to look into our communication mechanisms shows that there is to be a large increase in the requirements for meetings. Perhaps the methodology and perspective under which this paper was prepared is erroneous, but what are the alternatives? Since other services are to be established as the Consortium gets further organized, this will seemingly increase our individual, institution and Consortium need to know. No attempt has been made in this paper to begin to estimate costs for travel in time or in other expenses.

With OCLC participation terminals of a particular kind are required that use special phone lines. Other programs of MLC may require other devices. Should the Consortium, for example, have a WATS line?

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this paper is to explore the communication requirements and the consequences to our separate agencies in forming a Consortium and establishing new networks. What is obviously is that we shall have to allocate more of our time and resources into transferring information. Although this has been the responsibility of libraries as a social agency to do for other groups, have we arrived at the point of matching those agencies we have organized to assist in setting up an information transfer arrangement that is peculiar to library organizations? Networking is, after all, a matter of communication. That all of us are going to have to read, write, talk, meet and listen

more through more formal channels is going to have to be a greater part of our professional stance if we expect to utilize telecommunications and cooperative participation for our mutual benefit.